

**THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY IN THE MIDDLE
EAST: STATE VS. HUMAN SECURITY**

Abstract:	<p><i>This paper addresses US foreign and security policy, with respect to the question of whether the Biden administration's approach to security is predominantly state-based, interest-driven, and focuses on traditional threats or it takes a broader, more comprehensive form, encompassing other referent objects of security and non-traditional threats.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, the main goal of this paper is to describe prevalent types of security, threats, and objects of security in the Biden administration's public discourse, drawing on the theoretical concepts available in the literature. Focusing especially on the case of US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, this paper uses the method of content analysis to determine if Biden's public speeches and press conferences, and other public documents issued by his administration indicate that individual security and consequences to the people in the Middle East were considered when formulating policy, or if it was merely a result of state security considerations, disregarding its impact on human security.</i></p>
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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic shed new light on human security, as it has been one of the greatest threats to human lives transcending state borders¹. For the people in the Middle East, one of the most volatile regions in terms of conflict, the

¹ Edward Newman, *Covid-19: A Human Security Analysis*, in "Global Society", Vol. 36, No. 4, 2022, pp. 431-454

pandemic exacerbated the existing threats and created new ones. In addition to many sources of conflict which endanger human lives and thus render voluntary and involuntary migrations, people in the Middle East have encountered multiple threats to their individual security. Those threats stem from different areas, such as shortages of water and food, devastated infrastructure, poverty, global health crisis, etc. Considering that the US has been engaged in this region for many years, as well as the fact that human security had been previously invoked in relation to the policy toward the Middle East¹, the question arises whether the current administration incorporated some of the elements of the human security concept into its public discourse on foreign policy.

This question is especially relevant given that Biden's administration followed through with the decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, thus ending one of America's "forever wars"². However, between the announcement of the decision and its enactment, the Taliban gradually gained control over Afghan territory, concluding with Kabul takeover on August 15, 2021³. The withdrawal was concluded by the end of August, but the manner in which it was conducted, as well as the consequences stemming from it, resulted in a range of critiques directed at Biden's administration. As Labott wrote: "Americans were stunned by images of Afghans clinging to a U.S. military plane as it took off, with several men falling to their death on the tarmac"⁴. Those images, along with an attack on the airport during the evacuation resulting in over 180 deaths⁵ provoked reactions from a human security perspective.

Therefore, this paper will specifically focus on the case of Biden's approach to the Afghanistan withdrawal, with respect to the formulation of types of security, threats, and objects of security communicated by his administration. The aim of the paper is to determine if the Biden administration's public discourse pointed to a conventional understanding of security, which emphasizes the threats to US territorial integrity and sovereignty, or if it involved other types of security, sources of threats, and referent objects.

This paper will proceed as follows. The first section addresses the conceptual framework used in the paper built upon the previously developed concepts in the literature. In the second section, we will address reasons for

¹ Ben Walter, *Gendering Human Security in Afghanistan: In a Time of a Western Intervention*, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2017

² Joseph R. Biden, *Remarks on the End of United States Military Operations in Afghanistan*, in Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/352164>, (18.09.2022)

³ Jim Inhofe, *Afghanistan Was a Predictable, Preventable Disaster*, in "Foreign Policy", August 15, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/15/afghanistan-withdrawal-pullout-military-taliban-chaos-evacuation-biden-ihofe/>, (18.09.2022)

⁴ Elise Labott, *This Was the Albatross Around His Neck All Year*, in "Politico", August 17, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/08/17/biden-afghanistan-withdrawal-anniversary-00052268>, (21.09.2022)

⁵ *Idem*

selecting the case of Afghanistan to conduct content analysis. The third part of the paper is dedicated to the method of content analysis, while the fourth part entails its application and the presentation of results. The fifth section of the paper contains concluding remarks.

Theoretical considerations of applied concepts

This research is empirical in nature, which means that its subject entails “real-life” phenomena, which occur in a certain place and at a certain time. Two effects come from such a qualification of the subject. First, this means that we won’t assume a normative stance, but instead try to be neutral and describe what has been conveyed in public communication. Secondly, the theory will only provide a conceptual framework upon which we’re going to identify and classify types of security, threats, and objects of reference present in the public discourse. So, even if this research isn’t theoretical, concepts developed previously in the literature will be used.

The concept of security has been evolving from its traditional realist rendition for the last 40 years to include a deeper and wider scope. The traditional state-centric military concept of security has been challenged by different perspectives, such as Conventional and Critical Constructivism, the Copenhagen School, Critical Security Studies¹, Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism, Feminism, and Human security, including other sectors of security, different threat perceptions, and referent objects beyond the state². The “national security” dimension which we will examine in the Biden administration public discourse, will be predominantly built upon the military threat to the physical base of a state³ encompassing its territory, population, and wealth⁴, but it will also, where possible, take into account other sectors of security such as the political, the economic, the societal and the environmental encompassing the contribution of the Copenhagen school of security⁵. It will also include the notion of “homeland security”, based on its “reinforcing the state as the prime referent emphasized through the coinage of

¹ Also known as the Welsch School. Ben Walter, *Gendering Human Security in Afghanistan: In a Time of a Western Intervention*, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2017, p. 26.

² Barry Buzan, Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, p. 188

³ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, 2nd edition, Wheatsheaf Books Ltd, 1983, p. 75

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

⁵ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1998, pp. 23-24. Notwithstanding their contribution to the concept of security expansion, this school of thought can be considered more in line with the conventional conception of security, as it, according to Ben Walter, “ultimately privileges states and national societies as the primary actors and referent objects of security”; Ben Walter, *Op.cit.*, p. 22

the term ‘homeland’¹, even though it entailed some of the newer, non-traditional threats². The idea of this paper was to juxtapose the stance on security that distinguishes the state as an object of security that could be threatened with predominantly military actions to the opposite pole of the spectrum, where security is conceived not in terms of nation-states but of individuals, and where there is a broad range of sources of threats.

Therefore, the “human security” dimension will include references to changed objects of security to “individual human lives” as one of the main elements of this concept³. In addition to the changed object of security, the 1994 *Human Development Report*, which greatly contributed to the dissemination of this idea, included economic, food, health, environmental, political, personal physical security, and security of community into the concept⁴. As Gasper contends, this also meant redefining security threats to correspond to the goods being secured, as well as instruments for providing security⁵.

In the years following the affirmation of this concept, there were different approaches to its definition and scope. Some authors, like Owen, define human security as “the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats”⁶ and distinguish between human security, human rights, and human development⁷. According to Owen, defining thresholds is essential for threat identification in human security, especially since most threats (but not all) to human development “have the potential to become threats to human security if they surpass the threshold”⁸. The threshold he suggested refers to the category of threats “that pose a critical and pervasive risk to the vital core”⁹. Secondly, when it comes to human rights, there are fewer instances where threats can be transposed to human security¹⁰. Others, like Šehović accept a broader definition in which human security “is predicated on the *national* responsibility to accept, promote, and

¹ Shailza Singh, *The ‘Homeland Security Moment’ in International Politics: Implications for the Third World*, in “International Studies”, 2021, Vol. 1, No. 17, p. 3

² *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³ Amartya Sen, *Birth of a Discourse*, in *Routledge Handbook of Human Security* ed. by Mary Martin, Taylor Owen, Routledge, Oxon and New York, 2014

⁴ Des Gasper, *Human Security: From Definitions to Investigating a Discourse*, in *Routledge Handbook of Human Security* ed. by Mary Martin, Taylor Owen, Routledge, Oxon and New York, 2014, p. 29

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 30

⁶ Taylor Owen, *Human Security Thresholds*, in *Routledge Handbook of Human Security* ed. by Mary Martin and Taylor Owen, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2014, p. 60

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 62; Nikolaos Tzifakis, *Problematizing human security: a general/contextual conceptual approach*, in “Southeast European and Black Sea Studies”, Vol. 11, 2011, No. 4, p. 358

⁸ Taylor Owen, *Op.cit.*, p. 62

⁹ *Idem*

¹⁰ Taylor Owen, *Op.cit.*, p. 63

protect the—ever-expanding—pantheon of those human rights”¹. This paper accepts that human rights, human security, and human development are diverse concepts, and therefore follows the definition presented by Owen.

Tzifakis provides an overview of approaches to human security which range from narrow views such as interventionist, rights-based, and safety-based to broader ones such as developmental, new security, and gender-based². Even though the contested nature and scope of the concept can be important when applying it in the research, this paper draws on universalism as an aspect of human security i. e. “security of every individual irrespective of his country or place of residence”³. Therefore, we will focus on the question if the objects of security have shifted from those with strictly national attributes or if they remain framed in national bounds. In this context, the relation between state and human security isn’t about the R2P concept (which incited suspicion of human security as a way of “imposing western liberal preferences”)⁴, but instead about not prioritizing on the grounds of national belonging in instances of imminent threats.

Notwithstanding this argument, we decided to examine the public discourse of a state, because for the time being states remain relevant actors in international security including human security, whether based on their ability to securitize certain issues via speech acts or based on them being deemed, sole security providers⁵.

As for the threats, we will use the United Nations Development Programme 2022 Special Report as a broad framework for the operationalization of human security in this respect⁶. The categories of threats to human security from the mainstream perspective in this report include threats disrupting food systems,

¹ Annamari Bindenagel Šehović, *Reimagining State and Human Security Beyond Borders*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, p. 4

² Nikolaos Tzifakis, *Op.cit.*, p. 360

³ *Ibidem*, p. 353

⁴ Shaun Breslin and George Christou, *Has the human security agenda come of age? Definitions, discourses and debates*, in “Contemporary Politics”, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2011, p. 6. This view is also expressed by Hama, who argues that “the narrow perception of human security is becoming a tool to intervene in internal affairs of developing countries and impose Western values” - Hawre Hasan Hama, *State Security, Societal Security and Human Security*, in “Jadavpur Journal of International Relations”, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2017, p. 15

⁵ Annamari Bindenagel Šehović, *Op. cit.*, p. 16. According to Newman “an effective and accountable state is ideally the principal provider of security”- Edward Newman, *Op. cit.*, p. 435

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity*, Special Report, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/new-threats-human-security-anthropocene>, (13.10.2022)

health threats, threats exacerbating tensions and violent conflict, and threats to economic production and productivity¹.

The case of Afghanistan

In this paper, we chose Afghanistan as a case study to be subjected to content analysis based on the following considerations. First, Afghanistan is a country where the US had troops present for twenty years, and the military withdrawal provides us with an opportunity to examine the public discourse of an administration in the circumstances of retrenchment from the region. Secondly, this case displays the formulation of the terrorism threat in the context of the US-led Global War on Terror after two decades. Even though threats of terrorism weren't initially categorized as traditional national security threats, as Breslin and Christou argued, in light of 9/11 "non-traditional and HS threat perpetrated by non-state actors was reconstituted as an international security issue with a statist base"². Therefore, this analysis is supposed to provide an overview of this threat qualification.

Thirdly, Afghanistan has been one of the "top source countries for the global refugee population"³, many of whom are headed to Europe⁴. According to the UNHCR, the Afghan people have already been one of the largest refugee populations, and additionally, as a direct consequence of the events surrounding the US withdrawal "800.000 Afghans were newly displaced inside the country in 2021"⁵. Therefore, this case can offer an insight into the US position on migration and refugee crisis, which is also stemming from other parts of the Middle East, such as Syria and Libya, as well as human security threats the people in these circumstances experience.

Migrations, both voluntary and involuntary, can create diverse threats. Ferreira sums up the threats emanating from migrations into six categories:

1. "threat to the relationship between the country of origin and the country of destination";
2. "political threat or risk to the safety of the destination country";
3. "threat to the dominant culture/identity";
4. "social and economic problem for the host country";
5. "as instruments of threat against the country of origin";

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 51-55

² Shaun Breslin, George Christou, *Op. cit.*, p. 7

³ Karolína Augustová, Hameed Hakimi, *Migration from Afghanistan under the Taliban: Implications and strategies in the neighborhood and Europe*, in "Friedrich Ebert Stiftung", December 2021, p. 1

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Emergency*, <https://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan-emergency.html>, (09.09.2022)

6. “threat to human security”.¹ According to Ferreira, considering how they are interlinked, they exist within a migration-security nexus.² De Jong adds human security to this nexus, arguing that there are different configurations of three axes of the nexus (referent objects, drivers, and relations) which produce different outcomes³. According to Odutayo, “the paradigm of human security too often becomes subordinated to national security concern”, especially in the case of refugees⁴. In line with this argument, Camps-Febrer and Carter suggest that the current narrative presents migration as

a) “a direct threat to national, cultural, and religious identities and associated values; but, also, as a threat to prosperity and wealth”;

b) a threat of terrorism;

c) a criminal threat⁵.

Therefore, we will examine the public documents in search of the Biden administration’s view on migrants from the Middle East, for which the case of Afghanistan should provide evidence.

The method of content analysis

As mentioned previously, this paper will rely on content analysis to discern if the Biden administration’s public documents included considerations of primarily national security, as defined in the previous section, or if the public discourse included elements of human security when formulating policy toward the Middle East, especially focusing on the case of Afghanistan⁶. Klaus Krippendorf defines content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid

¹ Susana Ferreira, *Human Security and Migration in Europe’s Southern Borders*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2019, p. 36

² *Ibidem*, p. 126

³ Sara de Jong, *Resettling Afghan and Iraqi interpreters employed by Western armies: The Contradictions of the Migration–Security Nexus*, in “Security Dialogue”, Vol. 53 (3) 2022, p. 223. As Ribas-Mateos and Dunn contend “the lack of human security is a principal cause of migration”- Natalia Ribas Mateos, and Timothy J. Dunn, *Introduction to the Handbook on Human Security, Borders and Migration*, in Natalia Ribas-Mateos, Timothy J. Dunn, (eds.), *Human Security, Borders and Migration*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK and Massachusetts, 2021, p. 2

⁴ Aramide Odutayo, *Human security and the international refugee crisis*, in “Journal of Global Ethics”, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2016, p. 373

⁵ Blanca Camps-Febrer, John Andrew Carter, Jr., *New security: threat landscape and the emerging market for force*, in Natalia Ribas-Mateos, Timothy J. Dunn, (eds.), *Human Security, Borders and Migration*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK and Massachusetts, 2021, p. 114

⁶ For the purpose of this paper, we will conceive the MENA as encompassing the sequent states: Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, and UAE-Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia, *Middle East*, “Encyclopedia Britannica”, 12 Aug. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East>. Accessed 4 September 2022, (02.08.2022)

inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”¹. Content analysis is sometimes divided into two types – quantitative and qualitative. However, Krippendorff argues that this is a false dichotomy, since “text is always qualitative, to begin with”. Similarly, Margrit Schreier contends that there’s no sharp line dividing the two and that presenting results with coding frequencies doesn’t mean that the method is strictly quantitative because this is the step after the analysis². Nevertheless, analysis in this paper will primarily be qualitative, although we will use frequency a few times, mainly to address the importance of a certain reference.

To achieve the intended goal of identifying the approach Biden’s administration has adopted in relation to security, we will use two indices – the presence/absence of the concepts which indicates if they are being acknowledged, and the frequency of their usage which shows its importance³.

The research design has several steps to it. First, it’s important to distinguish what constitutes the text submitted for content analysis. Considering the aim of this paper, we will analyze the public documents of the administration which mainly consist of President Biden’s speeches, and press conferences with exchanges with reporters, the spokespersons’ speeches and press conferences, and some administration high officials’ speeches and press conferences. The time frame addressed in this paper will include only the documents which were created since Biden assumed office. They were divided temporally into two categories defined here:

- a) pre-announcement documents;
- b) announcement documents.

This classification of files was made after the initial reading, considering that we noticed certain differences in those time frames. This was also the reason for keeping the documents together instead of dividing them based on who delivered the speech since we didn’t notice any major differences during the initial reading. Additionally, only those documents where there had previously been determined that they can be analyzed through the lens of security will be used in this paper, meaning that we will use the thematic criterion for dividing the text into units⁴.

After determining which texts will be analyzed, and how they will be divided, content analysis will proceed with coding the units. Coding will be mainly data-driven, but it will also follow the concepts defined in the previous section.⁵ This means that we will start by looking for the presence of any of the indicators of

¹ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Second edition, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, 2004, p. 18

² Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore, 2012, pp. 15-36

³ Klaus Krippendorff, *Op.cit.*, p. 59

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 108

⁵ Margrit Schreier, *Op.cit.*, p. 59

types of security, threats, and objects of security mentioned above. Secondly, we will categorize the indicators found in the research. In determining the answer to the research question there will be two main dimensions – national security and human security. Thirdly, since the principal goal was to describe certain aspects the Biden’s administration’s public discourse, the presentation of results will mainly consist of descriptions of each category, so as Schreier suggests in cases like this, we will describe and illustrate the cases using continuous text¹. We will present only those categories which were found in the text and note that the remaining were absent.

The main analysis and presentation of the results

We conducted a content analysis of the Biden administration’s public documents², with the goal of determining the administration’s public discourse in the case of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. We particularly focused on the public documents where there was direct communication, but some of the speeches as prepared for the delivery were also included. Most of the communication with the press was done by the administration’s spokesperson, Jen Psaki, nevertheless, the public documents treated here also encompassed several of the President’s exchanges with reporters, as well as that of senior administration’s official Jake Sullivan.

We tried to include as many of the documents which related to Afghanistan as possible, but we excluded those where statements were repeated *verbatim*. The units subjected to analysis in this paper were the excerpts from those documents because press conferences in most cases entailed a broader list of topics. In addition, we used a thematic criterion when unitizing, which had us concentrating on the security concepts, excluding the excerpts which didn’t relate to the theme. We coded manually.

There is overwhelming evidence of Biden’s administration approaching the withdrawal from Afghanistan from a traditional national security perspective, considering that among the references the majority were categorized as belonging to the main category we labeled as “national security”. There were three subcategories to this main dimension – type of security, threat, and object of reference.

The results of the content analysis of the documents from the first period we analyzed are as follows. First, the dominant type of security in the Biden administration’s public discourse on Afghanistan withdrawal was “homeland security” which mostly referred to preserving territorial integrity. As mentioned

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 220

² The complete list of the documents used for the content analysis will be listed after the Bibliography section, considering that there are more than 50 different references that would extend the footnote text. All the documents used here were made available to the public by the *American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>, (21.09.2022)

previously, this type of security was defined as pertaining to the “national security” dimension, mostly because it focuses on the physical base (including the citizens) of the state as an object of security. Some examples of this category are: “we will maintain an over-the-horizon capacity to suppress future threats to the homeland”; “we will defend ourselves”; “protect and defend America's national security interests”; “to ensure Afghanistan would not be used as a base from which to attack our homeland again”.

As the next category suggests, the threats emanating from the situation in Afghanistan were mostly designated as those of terrorism. There were several formulations regarding this threat, some of which are: “not to allow any terrorists to threaten the United States or its allies from Afghan soil”; “to prevent future terrorist attacks against the United States planned from Afghanistan”. In the period prior to the withdrawal announcement, Biden’s administration repeatedly emphasized the change in threat as a reason for the decision. On several occasions, the threat was portrayed as “more dispersed, it's metastasized around the world”. Similarly, it was communicated that “the terrorist threat has evolved”; “al Qaeda's and ISIS's capabilities have advanced considerably since we first went into Afghanistan in 2001”. The “terrorist threat” was presented as a dominant reason for the initial US intervention in Afghanistan, thus its change was presented as the main reason for the drawdown of troops. The possibility of its re-emergence was also addressed in public documents a few times. Examples of the threat emanating from terrorism are the following: “we are not taking our eye off of the terrorist threat or signs of al Qaeda’s resurgence”; “counter the potential re-emergence of a terrorist threat to the homeland from Afghanistan”; “ensuring that Afghanistan can never again become a haven for terrorists that would threaten the United States or any of our allies”.

The third category under the dimension of national security refers to the objects of security in Biden’s administration’s public discourse on Afghanistan withdrawal. Besides already mentioned references to the “homeland”, this category was predominantly containing references such as: “American people”, “the safety and security of our troops”; “removing our troops from harm's way”; “to protect our diplomatic presence”. This points to the inference that Biden’s administration perceived American citizens as a primary object of security, whether it be in the US or abroad. In addition, this category also extends to US troops and diplomats. Examples of this category include the following statements: “We obviously put the safety and security of our personnel overseas at the top of our priority list”; “the President approaches these issues with a focus squarely on what will make life better, safer, and easier for working families. That is our primary metric”. However, even if citizens were designated as objects of security, this wasn’t attributed either to humans or to societal security, as it respectively related only to US nationals and didn’t involve preserving their identity.

As for the other main dimension which we labeled “human security”, references to it are rather scarce in the first period we analyzed, suggesting that national security was prioritized over human security. Besides the types of

security, threats, and security objects, when it comes to this dimension, we added another subcategory which we labeled humanitarian assistance. This added category implies that Biden's administration framed human security in terms of international cooperation instead of unilateral actions in foreign policy. Regarding the second main dimension, it proved more important to determine indices of absence. There weren't any mentions of any specific threats to people, which could potentially emanate in the context of US troop withdrawal. This translates into an absence of diverse types of security, excluding only mentions of Covid-19, which pertain to health security. However, even when it comes to the Covid-19 pandemic, which truly is a threat to all people equally, out of two references in total, one expressed concern for the "American people".

Two groups were particularly identified as needing protection – Afghan nationals who provided services for the US during the war, and the women in Afghanistan. However, even though there were a few references to humanitarian support for those groups, they were almost insignificant in terms of numbers in comparison with the references pertaining to the first dimension, or national security. We coded 54 references as national security (including all three subcategories) in the months before announcing the final decision, while there were only five references to humanitarian assistance, four references to Afghan women, one reference to the SIV (special immigrant visa) applicants, and one reference to refugees and internally displaced people.

The second period analyzed here encompasses public documents from April, when the final decision was announced, to August 31, 2021, when US troops left Afghanistan. National interests of the US and defending the homeland and American nationals were once again presented as the most important part of the decision. The other type of security publicly portrayed as important in the second period of the analysis is health security, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, as in the first period, there was the prevalence of possible "terrorism threats": "we will remain persistently vigilant against the terrorism threat in Afghanistan"; "how we can work together to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorist groups who pose a threat to the U.S. homeland". However, as the withdrawal approached, other threats could also be distinguished in the Biden administration's public discourse. Mostly, they accounted for the threats emanating from the immigration of Afghan nationals. In that respect, the emphasis was on the "security vetting" which "includes reviews of both biographic and biometric data"; and statements such as "Anyone arriving in the United States will have undergone a background check". In addition, the admittance of Afghan nationals was associated with perceived health threats to the Americans ("they would receive medical checkup"; "all evacuees will continue to undergo extensive COVID-19 and public health precautions, including immediate COVID-19 testing and offered vaccines upon arrival"). Therefore, this category displays that the US administration perceived threats from migration. Those threats were framed in a way that values nationally over human security since they

showed the administration's expressed concern over the ramifications of migrants' admittance to the US. The dominant two threats coming from migration were the threat of terrorism and health threat.

When it comes to the object of security in the second period, Biden's administration has prioritized American nationals ("the security of the American people"; "our troops would be at risk"). For instance, as Biden stated, "Our first priority in Kabul is getting American citizens out of the country as quickly and as safely as possible". However, the objects of security have expanded to include Afghan nationals who served as translators and interpreters during the war designated as "Afghan partners", with certain conditions mentioned previously. Other groups, such as women, were addressed from the international humanitarian assistance position.

Even if this part of the analyzed documents is still strongly in favor of the national security dimension, there are some elements that point to a broader scope of the security concept. Humanitarian assistance was mentioned more frequently in the second part of the period (16), and there was a reference to treating the immigrants "humanely", as well as that the Afghan people deserve "dignity". Specific threats to security objects other than the American people were identified. Most of them were recognized as threats to personal physical security, with examples such as: "their lives being threatened"; "they are vulnerable because their lives are at risk"; "atrocities and retaliation against civilians in other Taliban-controlled areas, which, of course, we are closely tracking and concerned about"; "they and their family will be victimized very badly as a consequence of what happens if they're left behind". There were questions regarding other people from Afghanistan but without the administration's response. There was an absence of references regarding the broader implications of the Afghan refugee crisis, including the implications of US policy in the region on this crisis.

Concluding remarks

The subject of this paper entailed the Biden administration's public discourse regarding Afghanistan withdrawal with the aim of determining the dominant concept of security it adopted. The case of Afghanistan was selected because it offered some insights into the US stance on migrants from the Middle East, and the US perception of threats in the circumstances of a military drawdown from the region it has long had troops in. We used the method of qualitative content analysis to examine presidential public documents before and after the announcement was made. The coding was done based on the data provided in the public documents, but it was broadly framed by the theoretical concepts available throughout the literature.

Our analysis showed that Biden's administration prioritized national over state security. This conclusion is made considering that the types of security publicly communicated by the President and members of the administration were narrowly defined to primarily entail homeland security. Secondly, there weren't many other threats besides terrorism highlighted throughout the public documents.

Thirdly, his administration mainly designated the US homeland and US citizens as objects of reference.

There were some references to human security in the public discourse. Humanitarian assistance, provided by the international community, was referenced considering the events unfolding during the withdrawal. Threats to the physical security of individuals were recognized on several occasions, however, they were only applied to certain groups. Besides this, there were mentions of health threats, mostly emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, those were also framed with priority being given to US nationals, and with their protection in mind. Hence, our conclusion is that the public discourse considered here is still inclined toward the traditional national security paradigm.

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